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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 THE HAGUE 002949

SIPDIS

STATE FOR EUR/UBI, EUR/NCE, EUR/RPM, PM/RSAT

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TAGS: [MCAP](#) [MARR](#) [PREL](#) [EZ](#) [NL](#) [NATO](#)

SUBJECT: DEMARCHE TO DUTCH ON CZECH FIGHTER ACQUISITION

REF: STATE 326262

Classified By: CLASSIFIED BY POLITICAL COUNSELOR MARY DALY FOR REASONS
1.5 (B AND D).

11. (C) PolMilOff delivered reftel points to Dutch MFA Security Policy Bureau Arms Transfer Policy Chief Paul van den IJssel on November 25. The Dutch are also focused on the issue, and Van den IJssel said they were contemplating phone calls at a "high political level" to the Czechs (perhaps by Defense Minister Kamp or State Secretary for Defense van der Knaap). He said the GONL shares U.S. concerns about the interoperability problems posed by the JAS-39 Gripen. Van den IJssel has instructed the Dutch Ambassador in Prague to approach the Czechs on the matter.

12. (C) ODC rep also discussed this issue on November 25 with MOD officials working on the Dutch proposal for the Czechs. State Secretary of Defense van der Knaap (no. 2 in MOD) has signed a letter to Czech Defense Minister Kostelka on this issue (text follows in paragraph 3) to be hand-delivered by the Dutch Ambassador in Prague. According to MOD source, van der Knaap has insisted that MOD's engagement be limited to this letter, in addition to MFA's engagement in Prague. Apparently van der Knaap has instructed MOD Chief for Materiel RADM van Dord that he does not want MOD, including the Dutch DATT in Prague, taking action beyond the transmission of the letter as he wants to keep the Dutch "above the fray."

13. (SBU) Begin text of Dutch MOD State Secretary letter to Czech Defense Minister:

"On October 30, 2003 the Netherlands presented an offer for the acquisition of a complete aircraft system and related services in order to meet the basic Czech requirements for airspace protection. The Netherlands offer is based on providing the Czech Republic with 14 most modern Lockheed Martin F-16 aircraft, in the Mid Life Update configuration, currently in use by the Royal Netherlands Air Force.

I would like to emphasize that the Netherlands Ministry of Defense, if requested, is willing to clarify this proposal, which has been prepared in close co-operation with the United States Air Force. Furthermore I would like to underline the fact that several European Countries, which are united in the European Participating Air Forces (EPAF), are using the F-16 aircraft. Therefore the Netherlands offer further created possibilities for the Czech Republic to further exploit co-operation within Europe as well as within NATO.

In addition, we welcome initiatives to deepen the existing long-term and broad relationship with the Czech Republic. Such a relationship, based upon common objectives and operational interests, will undoubtedly further strengthen our political and military partnership. In that perspective, I hope that we can start a dialogue about the mutual benefits of co-operation of our armed forces."

End text of Dutch letter.

14. (C) MOD source noted that Dutch Embassy Washington had been briefed on this matter by USG officials on November 21. Source further advises that "Dutch (and U.S.) working level members of the sales team" have advised Czechs to take into account:

- the reliability of other competitors' claims of NATO interoperability not only in weapons support systems but also C4I capability;
- the support and maintainability of the F-16 versus other competitors' claims of support for their weapons systems being tried and tested;
- the importance of NATO interoperability in relation to Prague Capabilities Commitments, training, air defense tactics, etc.;
- the financing arrangements of the deal in contrast to other competitors' arrangements (follow-on possibilities) and that ownership (regarding maintenance and maintainability) brings a higher level of responsibility over the fleet than a leased arrangement, also that configuration management, support development, and the cost sharing arrangements existent among EPAF nations provide users with the clout with the defense industry that supports that effort.

15. (C) Comment: MOD sources advise that van der Knaap's hesitation to engage more openly on this issue is likely the result of his concern about being the subject of parliamentary backlash should the Dutch fail to win the competition. (Van der Knaap has the lead in the GONL for selling off excess materiel such as F-16s, frigates and maritime patrol aircraft in the wake of Defense Minister Kamp's recently announced defense cuts.) End comment.
SOBEL